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COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT OF POULTRY THROUGH 4-H CLUB WORK

A radio talk by H. M. Hyre, Extension Poultryman, Morgantown, West Virginia, delivered in the 4-H club program, National Farm and Home Hour, Saturday, April 7, 1934, and broadcast by a network of 58 associate NBC radio stations.

It is a simple matter for a farm boy or girl to borrow two or three old setting hens and a few settings of eggs from their mother and start what they like to call, a 4-H poultry project. Many club members who are unable to meet the requirements of other projects, are often inclined to do this. The boy or girl who is inclined to be a bit lazy and who is looking for "snap project" is also, in many cases, interested in carrying a poultry project which consists of an old hen and a few chicks. Such a project, in most cases, will be of little or no value to the club member or to the home flock, or to the community.

In West Virginia we encourage the 4-H club poultry project members to accept the follow approved poultry practices. We are anxious that the boy or girl who carries a poultry project for one, two, three, or more years learn and become acquainted with the essentials that are necessary to make the poultry business more profitable.

With these desires foremost in our mind we require the first-year poultry project members to start at least 50 baby chicks on or before May 1 from purebred stock which has been recommended by the county agent, the home demonstration agent, or the state extension poultryman. The requirements for the second-year members are the same as those for the first year, except that second-year members must start at least 100 baby chicks. Third year members must start at least 100 chicks from trapnested stock with production records of 200 eggs or better per bird per year. Fourth-year members are required to start 250 or more chicks from the trapnested stock.

It is our policy to select boys and girls in the various communities who are interested in poultry, and who have the ability, means, and facilities for carrying a real 4-H poultry project. Such members, of course, are started off with the very best stock and with volume enough to make a real demonstration. These projects are followed very closely by the county agents and the extension poultryman to make sure that the members keep on the right track. They are encouraged to follow only approved methods in conducting their poultry project.

Last spring there were about 6,000 baby chicks from trapnested stock of 200 eggs per bird and better secured by 4-H poultry club members in various sections of the state. Some of the members in the eastern panhandle started from 200 to 500 chicks each. This was better stock than most of the farmers in that section kept. Several of the leading poultrymen in that section became interested in securing high production stock. Some of them ordered chicks along with the club members from the trapnested stock. Others bought cockerels from the club members to mate with their own flocks and still others are securing hatching eggs from the club members this spring in order to improve the production qualities of their own flocks this coming year.

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One of the 4-H boys in this section got his order in too late last spring to get chicks from the high production stock. This spring, however, he was the first to get his order in, and he has already gotten 200 chicks from pedigree stock. An interesting thing in this case is that the boy's mother sent her order along for 200 chicks, also, saying that Junior had done so well last year even with the chicks he did get that she had decided to try his method rather than bother with hens in brooding the chicks this year.

We have a boy in Ritchie county who has carried a poultry project for four years. This past winter he kept a flock of 200 well-bred layers. Last fall the flock was tested for B.W.D. and this spring he is supplying his neighbors with hatching eggs and chicks. He is planning to keep 600 layers this coming year.

There is no doubt in my mind but what the poultry in a community will improve if the 4-H poultry project members do their work well, and I am sure they will do their part if they are given an opportunity and proper encouragement.